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ABSTRACT

This brochure, in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole, is intended to help parents identify children who are gifted and may need an education that goes beyond what is provided in their classrooms. It focuses on eight characteristics typical of such children with examples of behaviors showing the characteristic. The characteristics are: (1) dedication; (2) expression; (3) friendship; (4) curiosity; (5) adaptability; (6) interest; (7) energy; and (8) elaboration. A student behavior observation form is attached on which parents can record student behaviors in each of these areas. (DB)

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Follow the Footprints

Discover the Hidden Talents of Your Children

INTRODUCTION

This brochure has been written for parents to help identify children who are gifted, who may need an education that goes beyond what is provided in their classrooms. It is important for parents to share information about their children that will help the school plan an appropriate program for each child.

Parents are asked to observe their children closely for signs of

- dedication
- expression
- friendship
- curiosity
- adaptability
- interest
- energy
- elaboration

We hope that the information in this brochure will help you help your children. As you read, you may find that parts are not clear. There are many people at your children's school or in your local school board office who will be happy to work with you.

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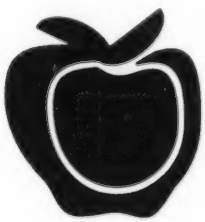

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Parents, we need you in order to bring your children's hidden talents to light. Teachers may find characteristics of talent in your children, but sometimes they cannot recognize these talents because of a language barrier or cultural differences. Your children may possess the same talents as those children from other cultures; however, there are differences based on cultural values, needs, and interests typical of each culture. You are the best advocate for your children's rights. Read this brochure carefully, as it may open a world of academic opportunities to your children.

There are different types of educational programs designed to address the specific needs of each student at a national, state, and school district level. To determine which program will be the most suitable for a specific student, there are psychological, academic, and aptitude tests, and also behavioral observation questionnaires for teachers and parents. One of these programs is designed for children with advanced abilities, interests, and talents. Perhaps your children need this program. We need your help and cooperation to find the best way to assist in your children's education.

Your children may be candidates for this program if they excel or have the capacity to excel above peers in regular school classes. Through this brochure, you can discover if your children have one, several, or all of the characteristics which will identify them for a special educational program in which they will develop fully as students and as individuals. Students who demonstrate great intellectual, creative, or leadership capacity, or who excel in a specific academic area may require educational services and activities that cannot be found in the regular school program.

Observe your children's behavior at home with the family, in the neighborhood with friends, in the church, or in any other organization to which you belong. Ask your children's teachers about their conduct, effort, and academic achievement. Write down each behavior at the moment it occurs or when you realize it. Speak with your children and ask them about their concerns. Pay attention to your children's questions and inclinations. Remember that a talent may be shown in a positive form or in a way that seems negative to us or members of our culture. Compare your children with other children of the same age. At the end of this brochure, you will find a place to write down your observations.

If your children have unusual interests or ideas for their ages; if they ask questions about everything; if they are inexhaustible and have self-initiative; if they seem "wise beyond their years;" if they are very interested in specific topics such as music, history, or politics in an exceptional way; if they adapt easily to a new culture; if they are different from the rest; speak with your children's teachers, counselors, or administrators. Show them your behavioral notations form and request psychological and academic evaluations for your children. The school system offers these services free of charge to those children who exhibit exceptional abilities. You can be the best detective to find your children's hidden talents. Observe the footprints of your children's conduct. Make brief and concise notations. You do not need to use complete sentences; sometimes a key word is enough as a reminder of a behavior.

Follow the footprints. Discover the hidden talents of your children.

Dedication	Self-motivated, follows through with assigned tasks, not easily discouraged, obsessed with special interests
Expression	Rich vocabulary, communicates well with others both verbally and physically, sometimes rebellious or defiant
Friendship	Collaborates well with others, works well in groups, group leaders
Curiosity	Asks many questions, discusses adult topics of interest related to history or current events, reads extensively
Adaptability	Accepts family responsibilities, cares for younger siblings, easily adapts to two cultures
Interest	Has collections and hobbies, demonstrates high levels of understanding and sensitivity regarding the needs of others, displays strong interests in arts and sciences, great sense of humor
Energy	Seems inexhaustible, exhibits great physical and mental endurance, enjoys games and conversations
Elaboration	Has different and unique ideas, creative problem solver, good imagination

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DEDICATION
Perhaps your children are bored with routine tasks. However, they may put forth maximum effort and do not get discouraged with laborious and complicated work that they choose. Your children do not rest until completing the final product. If they give their word and are determined to do something, you can be sure they will not rest until the work is done and that the work will be done well. Also, because they may be perfectionists, they are meticulous. They may be persistent and sometimes stubborn about their ideas, rigid in their thought, or analytical, logical, and mathematical. Look for this footprint in your children's behavior.

EXPRESSION
Some children are more expressive than others. Their vocabulary is very rich and extensive. They are categorized as "talkative," and sometimes they are penalized for talking too much, especially in the classroom. These children may express their feelings by kissing and hugging friends, siblings, or other family members. This display of affection is very typical of children from Hispanic culture. A person who knows the children's native language and culture could recognize this characteristic as a positive sign. Children can also express themselves by being unconcerned, irresponsible, rebellious, or defiant. Observe the impression left by this footprint.

FRIENDSHIP
There are children who are very sociable and look for other people's company (children or adults), who enjoy working on teams, and prefer not to be alone. They will be group leaders and organizers. They tend to dominate the other members of the group, directing any activity. Other children often choose them as friends and accept their leadership. Is this a footprint of your children's talents?

CURIOSITY
Children can demonstrate great curiosity about the surrounding world by asking many questions, sometimes unexpected, about anything. They are always looking for the relationship of cause and effect on things and try to discover the how and why of everything, however insignificant it is or may seem to us. Many times they look for adult company and themes. They read extensively and learn new information easily. They are interested in current events or historic topics, biographies, encyclopedias, poetry, drama, stories, science, and geography. They also demonstrate an unusual curiosity for their age about adult issues, such as religion and politics, and are very concerned with what is right or wrong, just or unjust. This can be another footprint to be discovered.

ADAPTABILITY
The family, customs, native country, religion, and cultural roots play an important role in the life of Haitian/Hispanic children. They like to help and assume responsibility in the family, especially with younger siblings, grandparents, and the most needy. They function easily in their native culture while, at the same time, adapting to the new culture and learning a new language. Sometimes they are the translators and interpreters for the family, assuming adult roles. Follow the trail left by your children.

INTEREST
There are children who possess a storehouse of knowledge about a variety of themes, demonstrating an unusual interest for their age. They are especially interested in the arts: painting, sculpture, music, dance, poetry, literature, and theater. They construct and disassemble toys trying to invent something new or to see how the toys function. They have collections and hobbies. Sometimes these children are interested in the problems, needs, and feelings of others. They demonstrate a great sense of humor, even in situations where others of their age do not find any humor. They do not adhere to stereotypes, showing interest in themes and occupations that are traditionally considered as typical of the opposite sex. Be a detective and discover this talent.

ENERGY
Perhaps your children seem inexhaustible, never tired, always talking. These children exhibit a great physical endurance and demonstrate high ability for sports. Their movements are well coordinated, and they enjoy games and athletic competitions. They need little sleep and are always active. Run after these footprints.

ELABORATION
Observe if your children think well and deeply before talking or answering, or if they have many diverse ideas about various things. Notice if they devise different ways to solve problems in unusual, unique, and ingenious manners. Perhaps they enjoy imagining fantastic situations, creating their own stories, or pretending they are fictional characters. The product of their work tends to be original and flexible, giving common things inventive uses and meanings that often cause surprise and admiration. This is the last footprint. Follow your children.

Name of Student _____

STUDENT BEHAVIOR OBSERVATION FORM

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PARENT

1. Indicate if your child displays any of the following characteristics by placing an X in the appropriate box.
2. Describe the behavior observed.

Characteristics	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Describe Behavior
1. DEDICATION				
2. EXPRESSION				
3. FRIENDSHIP				
4. CURIOSITY				
5. ADAPTABILITY				
6. INTEREST				
7. ENERGY				
8. ELABORATION				

Observe your child's behavior at home, at church, and in the neighborhood and record any activity that might point to a special talent not commonly associated with children of their age. If you think that your child has a unique talent, report it to your school and request an evaluation.

This brochure was modeled after the Texas Education Agency's *Celebrate Your Child*, and was funded by the State of Florida Department of Education, Division of Public Schools and Community Education, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services through general revenue funds. For additional copies contact the Clearinghouse Information Center, Room 628, Turlington Building, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400 or telephone: (850) 488-1879; FAX (850) 487-2679; Suncom: 278-1879; e-mail: cicbiscs@mail.doe.state.fl.us

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